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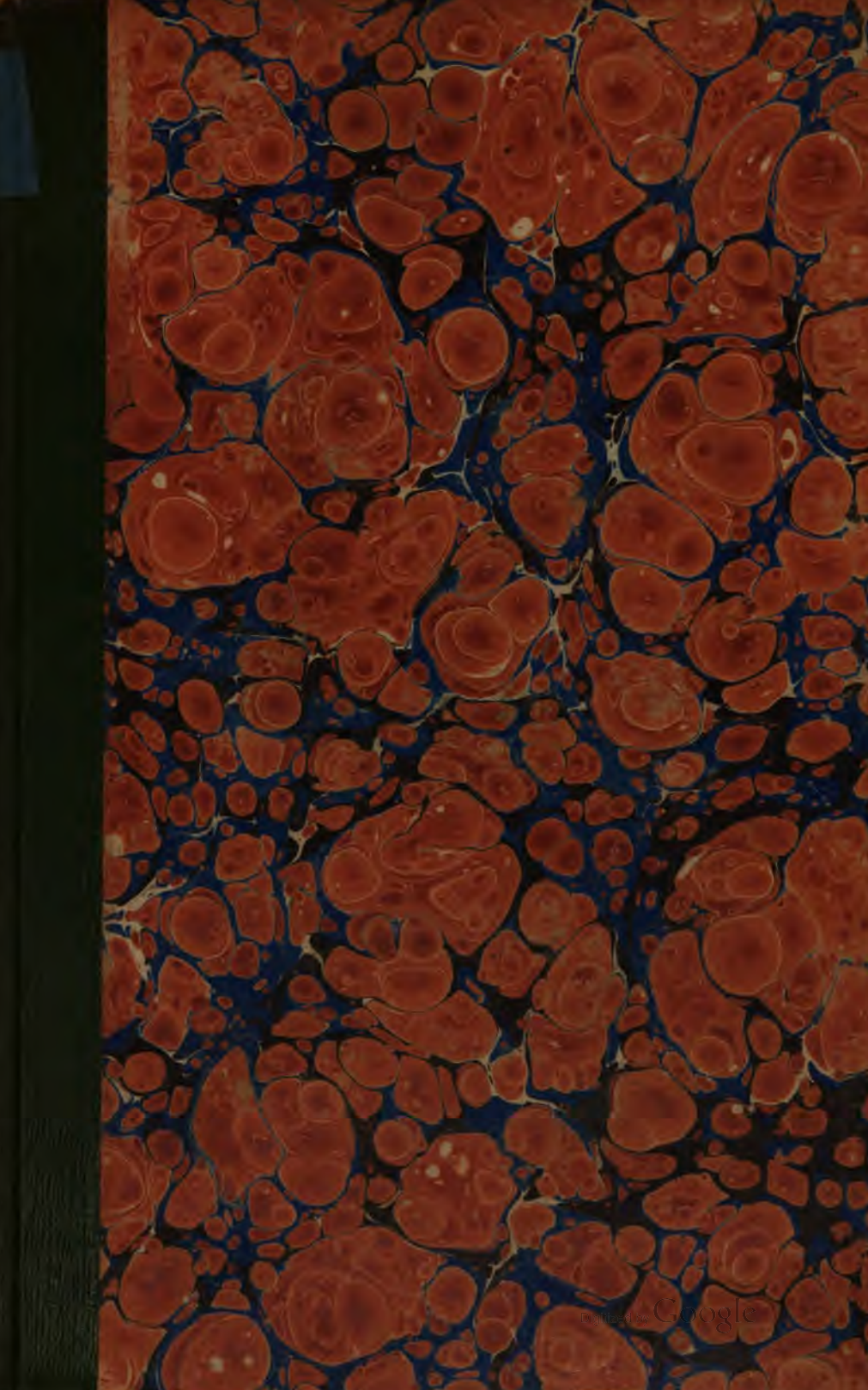
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1420.

Auricular Confession.

SIX LETTERS

IN

ANSWER TO THE ATTACKS

OF

ONE OF THE CITY LECTURERS

ON

THE CATHOLIC PRINCIPLE AND PRACTICE

OF

PRIVATE CONFESSION TO A PRIEST :

IN WHICH ARE EMBODIED

**SOME OF THE PRINCIPAL TESTIMONIES AS WELL OF THE PRIMITIVE
FATHERS AS OF THE HIGHEST ANGLICAN AUTHORITIES
IN FAVOUR OF THAT PRACTICE.**

WITH

A PREFACE, NOTES, AND A GENERAL POSTSCRIPT.

BY ACADEMICUS.

42. 1420.

OXFORD,

JOHN HENRY PARKER:

RIVINGTONS, LONDON.

MDCCCLXII.



OXFORD:

PRINTED BY I. SHRIMPTON.

PREFACE.

THE writer of the following Letters is fully aware that the discussion of theological questions in a newspaper is an anomaly to be justified only by peculiar circumstances. There is however in this respect a wide difference between an attack and a defence, between voluntarily introducing such discussions, and merely taking so much part in them, when already introduced, as may be necessary to set those facts right which have been directly or indirectly mis-stated, or at least so stated, as to give an impression very different from the true one.

Of course it is by no means assumed that it is always necessary to correct even mis-statements of facts: on the contrary, as the truth itself is invulnerable, and the more it is opposed and denied, the greater and more effectual is its ultimate triumph, if we regarded only the interests of the truth itself, we might well doubt the propriety, certainly the necessity, of *ever* undertaking to defend what so little needs our defence*: but it must be remembered, that though the truth is invulnerable, *we* are not; and therefore, as there is a time to speak, as well as a time to be silent,—so, while it appears mere waste of words (if not worse) to attempt undeceiving those who are *willingly deceived*, it does seem due to those who sincerely

* Those who are happily unaccustomed to the blinding prejudices of electioneering tactics, and would think it scarcely credible that the battle against Orthodoxy should have been waged, (owing to whatever motives, or through whatever carelessness), with weapons so exactly similar to those commonly adopted by political "Reformers", will certainly be more than a little astonished if ever they come to know the real nature of statements which were circulated without contradiction during the late attack. To have attempted, however, to keep pace with the newspapers, or even to gain a fair hearing in the midst of the then tumult, would have been something like *haranguing the waves*!—To give but one instance: a person whose sayings and doings in France were copied from paper to paper, and employed as a weapon of service in "the cause", has, to the writer's knowledge, *never crossed the Channel*! This fable appears to have been procured from the same source with another since imported, viz., *that our Bishops were engaged in getting up declarations against the succession of the Prince of Wales*! Let us hope in charity that the importers of both stories were alike ignorant of the real facts of the case.

desire the truth, and are in danger of being misled by erroneous or injuriously defective representations bearing on important questions, to put them in possession of the real facts of the case as regards the questions concerned.

Of such a nature appeared to the writer of the following pages the very incorrect impression which certain letters on Confession, published in the *Oxford Herald* by the Rev. W. S. Bricknell, (one of the Oxford City Lecturers,) were calculated to produce, as to the teaching of the Church of England and her leading Divines, in the minds of persons not extensively read in their works, and happily inexperienced in theological controversy, and therefore not aware of the extreme caution necessary before giving weight to the quotations of certain parties, and especially to the quotations of men of little research, who (as in the case now before us) procure them at second hand, and publish them without either acknowledging to whom they are indebted for them*, or being at the trouble themselves to ascertain their connection and object, and so being altogether in the dark as to their true import, quote them (as Mr. Bricknell is clearly shewn to have done) quite aside of, and even in direct opposition to, the real sentiments of their authors. All which was made so much the worse in Mr. Bricknell's case, by his systematic *reserve*, in concealing not merely the place whence his ready quoted quotations were copied, but even the references which were there given ready to his hand, and so voluntarily increasing to the utmost the difficulty of sifting his assertions, and ascertaining the truth.

Mr. Bricknell's first letter appeared in the *Oxford Herald* of Saturday Dec. 18. 1841, and was met by the first of the following series, in the next *Herald*, that of Friday Dec. 24. The second of this series, which was a kind of supplement to the first, appeared in the following number, that of Saturday Jan. 1. 1842, in which was contained also Mr. Bricknell's reply to the first.

* It is of course quite allowable to quote at second-hand without verifying, if a due acknowledgement is made of the channel through which a quotation has been received. Even this, however, requires no small caution.

In the next number, that of Saturday Jan. 8, appeared in like manner Academicus's reply to Mr. Bricknell's, and Mr. Bricknell's reply to Academicus's second letters. The Saturday after, (Jan. 15,) there was, for the third time, a similar exchange of letters.

The following number (that of Saturday Jan. 22) announced as "unavoidably postponed," an answer from Academicus alone; Mr. Bricknell having been sufficiently employed, as one may conjecture, for that week, in putting together an epistle of very nearly two columns in length, which appeared in the same *Herald*, addressed, with a well-proportioned title,

"To the Rev. James Ingram, D.D., President of Trinity College; William Cripps, Esq., M.P.; and the Members of the Oxford and London Committees for promoting the Election of the Rev. Isaac Williams to the Professorship of Poetry in the University of Oxford."

Mr. Bricknell being engaged in this happy diversion, the battle now subsided into single instead of double firing, and that too, thanks to the pressure from without upon the printers, (which made it difficult or impossible to insert communications of any length which arrived late in the week,) as well as to the other engagements of Academicus,—at a rather slower rate. Academicus's fifth answer duly appeared the following Saturday, Jan. 29: another letter from Mr. Bricknell was announced a week, and appeared a fortnight later, (Feb. 12.) The answer of Academicus to this last was delayed by both the above-mentioned causes;—the following notices being inserted:

Sat. Feb. 26.—"Academicus" requests us to say that he has been prevented by other engagements, both last week and this, from noticing Mr. Bricknell's last letter.

Sat. Mar. 5.—"Academicus" too late for this week.

Academicus took advantage of this last delay to make some corrections and additions, "with the view especially of finishing the subject at once." (P.S. to the 6th letter). The detention, however, of the letter for this purpose was in part the cause of its being again postponed with the following notice:

Sat. Mar. 12.—"Academicus" unavoidably delayed another week.

At length on Saturday March 26 (Easter-Eve), the last of the Six Letters appeared, with the following note appended by the Editor:

[We heartily hope that this controversy will, so far as we are concerned, here terminate. A newspaper is no proper vehicle for theological discussion, but as we had originally inserted Mr. Bricknell's observations, we felt that we could not in propriety refuse the rejoinder of Academicus. We now close our columns.—ED. O. H.]

The following letter in allusion to the controversy appeared the Saturday after. It is here reprinted for the purpose of observing at the outset, what is strongly stated in the sixth letter itself, that it would have been inconsistent with Academicus's plan to have entered on the directly Scriptural part of the subject.

AURICULAR CONFESSION.

To the Editor of the Oxford University Herald.

SIR,—I have been much pleased with the letter written by "Academicus," and published in your valuable Paper of this day, respecting *auricular confession*, and in which I agree to the fullest extent, as not only being sanctioned by the ancient Fathers, but also by the "Common Prayer" of the Established Church. I could have wished, however, that "Academicus" had (in addition to the evidence he has produced) quoted more passages from the New Testament, which abounds with them, and a reference to Cruden's Concordance will enable him to find them with facility. In requesting your insertion of this note, I respectfully wish it to be understood that I shall not join in any discussion upon this important part of Christian duty. The previous correspondence between "Academicus" and Mr. Bricknell I have not seen.

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

H. W. DEWHURST, F.E.S.L.

Surgeon, Professor of Astronomy, Zoology, &c. &c.

Lambeth, March 26. 1842.

Academicus entirely agrees with Mr. Dewhurst as to the clearness of Scripture teaching on the subject: this branch, however, of the controversy appeared too purely theological for a newspaper: it was also the less necessary on his part,—*first*, because it is partly included in some of the quotations

adduced in the first and sixth letters; 2. because *the facts* are in every one's reach; and 3. because of the very clearness to which Mr. Dewhurst alludes, which indeed is such that a thoughtful and teachable person, not already under the influence of any strong anti-Catholic bias, can hardly fail to recognise it. Accordingly it will be found that persons, not merely of what are commonly called "High Church", but also of the so-called "Evangelical" views, though differing so much on other points, have candidly and with excellent example acquiesced in this. The first of *Suum Cuique's* four letters,—which (as well as that of *A Constant Reader*) it has been thought desirable, on account of their close connection with the subject of Academicus's letters, and especially with Mr. Bricknell's share in the controversy, to annex to the Preface,—furnishes instances (which there is good reason to believe are far from being singular) with respect to English Evangelical Clergymen: of the opinions of our own and other leading Reformers, and of some of the foreign Protestant bodies, a specimen will be found in the Postscript,—further particulars in Mr. Wordsworth's very valuable Appendix to his late Sermon on Evangelical Repentance.

It has been the endeavour of the writer, considering the unsuitableness for direct theology of the channel chosen by Mr. Bricknell, to confine himself, as far as might be, to matter of fact. To abstain *entirely* from *any* remarks of a theological or practical nature, if indeed it would have been right to attempt it, was what the nature of the subject seemed hardly to admit. Should the publication of these letters be found to have contributed, in ever so small a degree, to guard against error or confirm in the truth, or, above all, by reminding of such truth, to stimulate to a deeper and more practical penitence, any such persons as from education or circumstances may be less guarded and provided for themselves, the writer will feel no cause to regret an irksome undertaking, to which not merely the laborious and unpleasant nature of the work itself, but also the great pressure of other occupations has made him peculiarly averse.

Oxford, June 3. 1842.

APPENDIX TO THE PREFACE.

LETTERS

OF

SUUM CUIQUE AND A CONSTANT READER.

THE letters of Suum Cuique appeared, Sat. Dec. 11. 1841, Friday Dec. 24. 1841, Sat. Jan. 8. 1842, and Sat. Jan. 22. 1842, respectively. The first was noticed by Mr. Bricknell, in the first of those attacks in answer to which Academicus's letters were written; the second and third, in the second and fourth of that same course.—That of "A Constant Reader" appeared in the *Herald* of Saturday Dec. 18. 1842.

LETTERS OF SUUM CUIQUE.

LETTER I.

To the Editor of the Oxford University Herald.

SIR,—A good deal has been said lately about Confession, and the honour of following out in this particular the primitive and Scriptural principles of our Prayer-Book assumed most unfairly to belong exclusively to 'the Oxford School'. Allow me, however, to assure you that this is in reality any thing but true, I myself having been informed, not many months since, from independent sources, of two different 'Evangelical' Clergymen who, to my informants' knowledge, were in the habit several years since of recommending and receiving auricular confessions and enjoining penance, both informants further testifying to the good effects they knew to have resulted from the practice. That you may be the better able to judge of the authority on which the above statement is made, I annex (for your own private information), together with my own name, the names of my informants; and am, Sir, yours truly,

SUUM CUIQUE.

Oxford, Dec. 6. 1841.

LETTER II.

To the Editor of the Oxford University Herald.

SIR,—I perceive by your last number, that a Mr. W. S. Bricknell has made a “call” upon me to favour him with the names of the two Evangelical Clergymen whom I mentioned in my last. I beg to inform Mr. W. S. Bricknell that he is greatly mistaken if he expects his “call” to be answered by, yours truly,

SUUM CUIQUE.

Oxford, Dec. 20. 1841.

P. S. No less mistaken was this same Mr. Bricknell in his rather clever idea of substituting for *Suum Cuique*, *Tu Quoque*. As for his giving *his own paraphrase* in such a way that it has been mistaken for an extract from my letter, it would be uncharitable to call that clever.

LETTER III.

To the Editor of the Oxford University Herald.

SIR,—I am surprised to find that Mr. Bricknell thinks it “disingenuous” to state facts in favour of Confession. If he wishes to take advantage of my being anonymous, and insinuate that what I have stated is or may be *untrue*, I beg to remind him that though anonymous to him, neither I nor my informants are anonymous to you; requesting yourself at the same time, if you think us at all unworthy of credit, to say so; if not, I venture to hope that Mr. Bricknell (however unpalatable he may find the facts in question) will endeavour for the future to treat even anonymous opponents in a more Christian spirit.

I am, Sir, yours truly,

SUUM CUIQUE.

Jan. 3. 1842.

LETTER IV.

To the Editor of the Oxford University Herald.

SIR,—I have to acknowledge Mr. Bricknell’s explanation. What remains is mere fancy, founded on air; and in this region I beg to leave Mr. Bricknell, together with his friends*, quite at liberty; remaining myself, *in this as in all other respects*, yours truly,

SUUM CUIQUE.

Jan. 18. 1842.

[* I. e. those who prevent him from being ‘singular in his opinion’:—see his fourth letter.]

LETTER OF A CONSTANT READER.

To the Editor of the Oxford University Herald.

SIR,—It is instructive to observe the extreme practical ignorance of some of those who pretend to “lead” public opinion. The *Standard* of Thursday last reprints from the *Morning Herald* an article in which a Bishop of the Church of England is actually called upon (by the Editor forsooth) to *suspend* all such of his Clergy as may be found guilty of the grave charge of *recommending private confession according to the Church Prayer-Book!!!* Surely Mr. Editor, we shall at length open our eyes to the necessity of a more active and general support of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge.—I am, Sir; your obedient servant,

A CONSTANT READER.

Oxford, Dec. 10. 1841.

LETTERS OF ACADEMICUS

ON

PRIVATE CONFESSION TO A PRIEST.

LETTER I.

To the Editor of the Oxford University Herald.

SIR,—As your correspondent, Mr. Bricknell, has given from Burnet what he conceives to be the *disadvantages* of the practice of Auricular Confession, I take the liberty of introducing to his notice the following passages in favour of it, derived from authorities of considerably more weight in the Church than Bishop Burnet. As for his quotations from Hooker, Hooker's own practice (see Walton's *Lives*, published by the Christian Knowledge Society,) is decisive evidence that *he* was opposed to nothing but the making it *compulsory*, or urging it as *necessary*, neither of which has been heard of amongst us: for as for Mr. Powell's expression of '*enforcing*', if he meant any thing definite by it, it is well known that he was under a total mistake. This *enforcing*, or, at most, objections in particular cases, is all that is really meant by those Divines of any note who have seemed to oppose it, as indeed one of Mr. Bricknell's own authorities, even *Bishop Jewell* [as quoted by himself], clearly shews: "As for private confession", says that "*irreverent Dissenter*",^a "*abuses and errors set apart, we do not condemn it, but leave it at liberty*"^b.

Even Burnet himself may perhaps mean no more; but be that as it may, it is very certain that far greater and better authorities than Burnet have advocated the practice, as the following extracts afford satisfactory proof.

I begin with giving entire, as I find it, the fourth part of the Appendix (p. 44, &c.) of a recent and very valuable Tract, entitled, "The Doctrine of the Catholic Church in England on the Holy Eucharist illustrated by extracts from her great Divines, with an Appendix on various other points of faith and practice. Oxford, Parker, 1841."

^a "As for private confession," (says that "*irreverent Dissenter*", Bishop Jewell,) "*abuses and errors set apart, we do not condemn it, but leave it at liberty.*"—*Mr. Bricknell's First Letter.*

^b So also Hooker, even while in Mr. Bricknell's hands:—"the Fathers—did not gather by our Saviour's words any *such necessity*" &c. thereby marking clearly what it was to which *he* was opposed.—It must have been owing to the great haste with which Mr. Bricknell's letters were evidently composed, that both this and the passage from Jewell, which it is impossible could otherwise be of service to his cause than as an insinuation, such as that about fasting in his third letter, should have found insertion in them. It is, however, only by confounding voluntary with compulsory confession, that he is able to make out even the shadow of a case.

"APPENDIX IV. PRIVATE CONFESSION AND ABSOLUTION—*Bishop Overall*.—'Let him come to me.] Confession of sins must necessarily be made to them to whom the dispensation of the mysteries of God is committed. For so they which in former times repented among the saints are read to have done. It is written in the Gospel, that they confessed their sins to John the Baptist. In the Acts they all confessed their sins unto the Apostles of whom they were baptized.'—*Notes on the Common Prayer*.

"*Bishop Montague*.—'Doth he (the Minister) especially exhort them (his parishioners) to make confession of their sins to himself, or some other learned, grave, and discreet Minister, especially in Lent, against that holy time of Easter; that they may receive comfort and absolution, so as to become worthy receivers of such sacred mysteries?' *Articles of Inquiry*, tit. vii. 4.

"*Bishop White*.—'Protestants, in their doctrine, acknowledge that private confession of sins, made by penitent people to the Pastors of their souls, and particular absolution, or special application of the promises of the Gospel to such as are penitent, are profitable helps of virtue, godliness, and spiritual comfort.'—*Conference with Fisher*, p. 186.

"*Bishop Taylor*.—'We may very much be helped if we take in the assistance of a spiritual guide: therefore the Church of God in all ages hath commended, and in most ages enjoined, that we confess our sins, and discover the state and condition of our souls, to such a person whom we or our superiors judge fit to help us in such need. For so, if we confess our sins to another, as St. James advises, we shall obtain the prayers of the holy man whom God and the Church hath appointed solemnly to pray for us; and when he knows our needs, he can best minister comfort or reproof, oil or caustics; he can more opportunely recommend your particular state to God, he can determine your cases of conscience, and judge better for you than you do for yourself; and the shame of opening such ulcers may restrain your forwardness to contract them. . . . And it were well if this duty were practised prudently and innocently, in order to public discipline.'—*Holy Living*, chap. iv. sec. 9.

"*Bishop Cosin*.—(Points of agreement with the Church of Rome.)
6. . . . 'In public^e or private absolution of penitent sinners.' . . .

^e It may be observed in passing, that the absolution in our daily morning and evening service should be regarded as an effective declaration of pardon (in such sense as pardon is given to a number at once) to all who have made the preceding confession with a true penitent heart and lively faith. If it be asked why, if we are already absolved, we are immediately exhorted to pray for true repentance, it may be answered that true repentance is so far from being unsuitable to one already pardoned, that it is, on the contrary, a condition of the validity of the pardon already bestowed; and for this reason, as well as

11. 'In the use of indulgences, or abating the rigour of the Canons imposed upon offenders, according to their repentance, and their want of ability to undergo them.'

"And *Wheatly* in later times ;—

'We may still, I presume, wish very consistently with the determination of our Church, that our people would apply themselves oftener than they do to their spiritual physicians, even in the time of their health. Since it is much to be feared, they are wounded oftener than they complain, and yet through aversion of disclosing their sore, suffer it to gangrene, for want of their help who should work the cure. But present ease is not the only benefit the penitent may expect from his Confessor's aid : he will be better assisted in the regulation of his life, and when his last conflict shall make its approach, the holy man, being no stranger to the state of his soul, will be better prepared to guide and conduct it though all difficulties that may oppose.'—*On the Common Prayer*, chap. xi. sec. 4.

"[See also Hammond's Annotations on James v. 16.]"

To which valuable collection I will add three decisive passages ; the first two from the First Book of Edward VI., which the very Parliament which (in one of the most Protestant moments of our history) substituted the Second for it, calls "*a very godly order*", "*agreeable to the Word of God and the Primitive Church, very comfortable to all good people desiring to live in Christian conversation, and most profitable to the estate of this realm*"; and concerning which the same authority adds also, *that such doubts as had arisen had been occasioned "rather by the curiosity of the minister and mistakers, than of any other worthy cause"*. (5 and 6 Edw. VI. c. 1.)

1. "Requiring such as shall be satisfied with a general confession not to be offended with them that do use, to their further satisfying, *the auricular and secret confession to the Priest*; nor those also which think needful or convenient, for the quietness of their own consciences, particularly to open their sins to the Priest, to be offended with them that are satisfied with their humble confession to God, and the general confession to the Church : but in all things to follow and keep the rule of charity;" &c.—*Exhortation before the Communion*, p. 278. [in Dr. Cardwell's editions.]

because the grace given in absolution is a great help thereto, this exhortation is introduced by the conjunction *Wherefore*. The variation of *form*, it must be remembered, in the expressions, 'He pardoneth and absolveth', 'Almighty God—pardon and absolve', 'By His authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins', does not of *itself*, or *as such*, affect the substance, much less the validity, of the absolution conveyed ;—but it must by no means be supposed that the grace of a general confession and absolution of a number at once, is at all the same thing with that of Sacramental Absolution given after a special confession of sins. This last absolution it is which our Homily allows to be a (Minor) Sacrament, and of which it states "*imposition of hands*" to be "*the visible sign*". See the extract given in Letter III. (p. 17.)

2. "Here shall the sick person make a special confession, if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter^d. After which confession the Priest shall absolve him after this form: *and the same form of absolution shall be used IN ALL PRIVATE CONFESSIONS.*"—*Visitation of the Sick*, p. 363.

The third, well worthy of the most serious consideration, from the great Archbishop Bramhall:

"No better physic for a full stomach than a vomit. Bodily sores do sometimes compel a man to put off natural shamefacedness, and to offer his less comely parts to the view of the surgeon. By a little shame, which we suffer before our fellow-servant, we prevent that great confusion of face, which otherwise must fall upon impenitent sinners at the Day of Judgment."—*Bramhall's Works*, p. 997.

The above extracts will abundantly establish the fact, that to recommend private confession is anything but to oppose either the letter or the spirit^e of the Church of England.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
ACADEMICUS.

[Oxford, Dec. 23. 1841.]

LETTER II.

To the Editor of the Oxford University Herald.

SIR,—Your correspondent, Mr. Bricknell, was perhaps desirous of saving trouble both to himself and his readers by giving his quotations *without chapter and verse*. Having, however, accidentally met with his standard passage from Burnet, I take the liberty of sending you *the first half of the sentence preceding the commencement of his quotation*:—"In the use of Confession, when proposed AS OUR CHURCH DOES, as matter of advice and not of obligation, we are very sensible many good ends may be attained; but &c." Burnet therefore admits,

^d In our present Prayer-book the expression is stronger: "Here shall the sick person be moved to make a special confession of his sins, if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter." On which Bishop Sparrow (*Rationale*, p. 266. Oxford, Parker, 1840.) makes this important remark: "*It should be considered whether every deadly sin be not a weighty matter.*"

^e It should be understood, that even Mr. Bricknell, when he feels it his duty to state formally against what it is that he is making such a mighty outcry himself, and labouring so hard in the vain attempt to rouse the public to cry out with him,—even Mr. Bricknell does not charge those who maintain Catholic views "with direct opposition to the doctrines and discipline of the Church of England", but "with an attempt to revive practices which that Church, in her wisdom, has not thought proper to encourage"; "with setting up their own judgment against hers," and "pretending to have more understanding than their teachers." (See his first letter.) The groundlessness of even this *minimum* charge, and that the Church of England, "in her wisdom", has "thought proper to encourage" private confession, the proofs adduced in these letters will be sufficient, it is hoped, to satisfy every clear and candid judge.

on his cross examination, that the Church of England *does recommend* the practice : how then could Mr. Bricknell venture to call in Burnet as a witness to assist him in fastening on such of her Ministers as *join* in her recommendation, the charge of going against her spirit, when even that very witness allows that they do only what "*OUR CHURCH DOES*"? In the rest of the paragraph Burnet certainly objects strongly to its *being made a law*, and, in pointing out its dangers in the way he does, intends perhaps to urge great caution even in recommending it : more than this cannot be proved.

And now, Sir, having found and despatched Mr. Bricknell's quotation from Burnet, and having in my last called attention to the fact that Hooker's own practice, as recorded in Walton's Lives, proved that *he* could not mean to oppose Confession itself, but only *the enforcing it*, I beg, after Mr. Bricknell's own example, and with far more justice, to "call upon" *him* to enable his readers to judge fairly of the context of his quotations from that venerable Divine, *by giving chapter and verse* ; and, to use his own words, "He cannot hesitate to comply with my request, if there be really anything of importance in his communication."

I remain, Sir, your obedient Servant,

ACADEMICUS.

Oxford, Christmas Eve, 1841.

P. S. Since writing the above, I have been shewn Bishop Taylor's "Advice concerning Confession", in his "Guide for the Penitent"^f, printed with "The Golden Grove", pp. 156—158, Oxford, Parker, 1836. The whole five sections are well worthy of an attentive perusal. I send you the first and third, which are more directly to my purpose.

"*Advice concerning Confession*. I. That besides this examination of your conscience, (which may be done in secret between God and your own soul,) there is great use of holy Confession ; which though it be not generally in all cases and peremptorily commanded, as if without it no salvation could possibly be had ; yet you are advised by the Church under whose discipline you live, that before you are to receive the Holy Sacrament, or when you are visited with any dangerous sickness, if you find any one particular sin, or more, that lies heavy upon you, to disburden yourself of it into the bosom of your Confessor, who not only stands between God and you to pray for you, but hath the power of the keys committed to him, upon

^f Since the above extract was made, it has been stated (without reference to the present controversy), that this work is not sufficiently proved to be Taylor's. Into this question it is unnecessary for me to enter ; as whether or not it is rightly attributed to Taylor, the credit and approbation it has so long enjoyed in the Church of England may well be considered as giving it a greater weight than even Taylor's name could give it.

your true repentance to absolve you in Christ's name from those sins which you have confessed to him."

"III. That having made choice of such a Confessor who is every way qualified that you may trust your soul with him, you are advised plainly and sincerely to open your heart to him; and that, laying aside all consideration of any personal weakness in him, you are to look upon him only as he is a trustee from God; and commissioned by Him as His ministerial deputy, to hear, and judge, and absolve you."

LETTER III.

To the Editor of the Oxford University Herald.

SIR,—Your correspondent, Mr. Bricknell, charges me with *insinuating that Hooker preached what he did not practise*. So heavy a charge, coming from the pen of a clergyman, ought certainly to have some foundation: you will be surprised, therefore, when I say that the passage which Mr. Bricknell has so perverted is the following: "As for his (Mr. Bricknell's) quotations from Hooker, Hooker's own practice (see Walton's *Lives*, published by the Christian Knowledge Society,) is decisive evidence that *he* was opposed to nothing but the making it *compulsory*, or urging it as *necessary*, neither of which has been heard of amongst us". Surely, Sir, nothing can well be more clear than that my object was not to oppose Hooker's practice to his preaching, and so merely neutralize his evidence, but to *explain the latter by the former*, and so claim him altogether as a witness in favour of private confession. So injurious a perversion, advanced publicly by one who from his position in society must be incapable of *intentionally* misrepresenting and defaming his opponent, would be altogether unaccountable, did we not see daily that the power of prejudice is often so great as to pervert not merely the mental, but even the bodily eyes. I once had occasion to notice a letter in a periodical, commenting in the severest language on a running title (in one of the *Tracts for the Times*), which, when I came to refer to it, was *totally different* both in words and in meaning, from what the *blinding* prejudice of this censor had led him both to read and to *print*!

Should any one ask why I did not give the public the passages, or at least the references, from Walton's *Lives*, especially as this is a practice for which I have myself contended in opposition to Mr. Bricknell; it was, because the same friend who did me the favour to call my attention to them, had himself written them out and sent them to the *Herald*, in which they were promised insertion, though they seem since to have been mislaid or overlooked. Under these

circumstances, I was naturally unwilling to give either your readers or myself the trouble of going twice over the same ground; but should the letter to which I allude, and which I still hope to see next Saturday, have been withdrawn, or otherwise not appear, I will see myself that the public are put in possession of the authorities on which my statement rests^g.

As to the passage from the Second Book of Homilies, which, according to custom, Mr. Bricknell has adduced without *chapter and verse*, but which is taken from the second part of the Homily on Repentance, (p. 593—595 of the 12mo. edition of the Christian Knowledge Society, London, 1828,) the concluding words of that passage itself fully confirm all that I have maintained, viz., that the Church of England and her leading Divines are opposed to nothing but this, "that any man ~~SHOULD BE BOUND~~ to the numbering of his sins." Against voluntary confession they say nothing, but on the contrary, they praise and recommend it. As for the words of St. James (5, 16), quoted in the above passage, it would certainly be a narrow view to *limit* that text to private confession to the Priest: the more natural interpretation is, that private confession to the Priest is a *small part only* of what is there recommended.

As however Mr. Bricknell has *his* quotation from the Homilies, so I have *mine*,—a quotation implying directly the "*ordinary practice*" (and that as a *minor "Sacrament"*) of that private confession and absolution which Mr. Bricknell's quotation so fully allows:

"For tho' Absolution hath the promise of forgiveness of sin, yet by the express word of the New Testament it hath not this promise annexed and tied to THE VISIBLE SIGN, WHICH IS IMPOSITION OF HANDS. For this visible sign (I mean laying on of hands) is not expressly commanded in the New Testament to be used in Absolution, as the visible signs in Baptism and the Lord's Supper are: and therefore Absolution is no such Sacrament as Baptism and the Communion are." Homily "of Common Prayer and the Sacraments", p. 388 of the above-mentioned edition.

And now, Sir, having shewn clearly that the *Church herself*, as well as her greatest lights and most celebrated Divines, distinctly recommend private confession, so that Mr. Bricknell's objection, borrowed from the Tract of which I spoke in my first letter, (Introduction, p. 5.) that "Bishops derive whatever authority they possess from the Church", is altogether out of place here; the Bishops and Divines whom I have quoted *supporting and following out*, not, (like

[^g We have since been requested by the gentleman alluded to by our correspondent not to print the letter.—ED. O. H.]

those of whom the Tract speaks) *opposing*, the teaching of the Church, I cannot but express my hope that Mr. Bricknell will see the propriety, as a matter both of candour and of *discernment*, of making that manly avowal which alone can satisfy the public that he at least is not engaged in mere *electioneering* attacks, nor determined to struggle hopelessly against the clear and decisive testimony of authorities which he himself first set the example of bringing forward.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Epiphany, 1842.

ACADEMICUS.

LETTER IV.

To the Editor of the Oxford University Herald.

SIR,—I beg to remind Mr. Bricknell that my call upon him to give *chapter and verse* for his quotations, was for the sake of the public as well as myself.^h As, however, he is reluctant to give them, I forbear to press an unpleasant request.ⁱ

As to the remainder he has now given us of Burnet's words, there is nothing more contained in them than in what he gave before. Burnet himself fully admits (as I have already shewn), that OUR CHURCH recommends private confession; nor does Mr. Bricknell's attempted explanation (to which he refers us back) at all weaken the force of that admission. After this, even if Burnet's own private opinion *were* opposed to the practice, on Mr. Bricknell's own shewing it would go for nothing, being contrary to the admitted teaching of the Church herself. Happily, however, for Burnet, it cannot be proved (as I have already observed) that even he meant anything more than to urge great caution in its use.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

January 12, 1842.

ACADEMICUS.

P. S. 1. I am sorry the letter to which I alluded in my last has been withdrawn. I will send you the references I promised, but must leave both them and another valuable passage from Taylor for another letter.

2. The *Oxford Chronicle*, referring to the passage I gave you from Taylor,^k in which that Divine speaks of "your Confessor, who not

^h Mr. Bricknell expressed his readiness to furnish me with all the information I required, 'if I would favour him with a public, or even *private* application under my real name.' I have not hitherto felt the necessity of troubling either him or the public with a name of no consequence, but I have given in my General Postscript a *denouement* of the mystery about Mr. Bricknell's quotations, which is equally curious and instructive.

ⁱ They will be found, together with full remarks, in the General Postscript; and will repay an attentive examination.

^k Letter II. p. 15. I perceive, however, that it is not to this, but to the passage given in Letter I. p. 12, that the *Chronicle* refers. How far this mends the matter, I must leave to the reader to determine.

only stands between God and you to pray for you, but hath the power of the keys committed to him, upon your true repentance to absolve you in Christ's name from those sins which you have confessed to him", accuses me of having "tortured into an approval of auricular confession to a Priest, in order to absolution", "his (Taylor's) recommendation of confession 'one to another', as St. James advises"! If the assurance of this charge surprises your readers, what will they think of the next sentence? "The above notices", continues that unhappy journal, "are necessarily brief, but their accuracy may be relied upon, and can be easily verified"!!!

An illustration may perhaps throw light on the *peculiar* style of the *Chronicle*.

"Our readers will learn with indignation that numbers of Conservative cab-horses are daily feasted on *pickled salmon*. Incredible as this may seem, all who know the metropolis will be ready to confirm the truth of our statement."

Facts equally true with the above, and not less coolly and confidently announced, are furnished with a steady weekly supply to the deluded votaries of the *Oxford Chronicle*. Well may they be pitied who read nothing else!¹

3. The same paper makes a rather curious charge of partiality against yourself; the proof being that you have published without remark such and such letters in favour of Mr. Williams, not a word being said of the hosts of letters *against* that gentleman under the material (not the argumentative) weight of which your columns have so long groaned. If the meaning of the *Chronicle* is, *that there is nothing* in Mr. Bricknell's and the other letters on that side, this surely is not *your* fault. You can but give both sides an equal opportunity of speaking; and having done this, if the speeches of the accusers are found to be weak and empty, the fault is surely their own, or to speak more correctly, that of the cause they have had the misfortune to choose.

LETTER V.

To the Editor of the Oxford University Herald.

SIR,—Driven to extremities, your correspondent, Mr. Bricknell, tries a new line, that of summing up *a part* of the evidence. In despair

¹ It is fair, however, to acknowledge, that the *regularity* of the *Chronicle* is not nearly so dangerous as the *uncertainty* of some of its contemporaries. A *systematic* peculiarity can escape no one long: we may *wonder* occasionally at the more than usual skill and boldness of the writer, but of course none but strangers can be *misled* by his statements or representations. It is not, therefore, of those who *systematically*, but of those who *occasionally*, indulge in fiction, so that one can be sure neither of their statements nor of the *contrary* of their *statements*, that one has a real right to complain.

of making anything of the whole, he confines himself to what seems the more favourable part, either dismissing without ceremony, or not seeing at all, those decisive authorities which to all open eyes shew at once the true meaning of his own quotations. This, in fact, is the system which alone keeps alive Mr. Bricknell's whole party: all who have reasoned much with persons of Calvinistic or other mutilated views, will understand what I mean, and be accustomed to a similar mode of dealing with holy Scripture. To the same extremity is Mr. Bricknell driven in the vain attempt to oppose or discredit what as well the Bible as the Fathers, as well the Church Universal as the Church of England, as well our own authorized documents as our best Divines, all unite in recommending. Instead of attempting to explain *all the passages*, to take *all the facts* into consideration, Mr. Bricknell's plan is, to attempt the explanation merely of a few isolated extracts, which he fancies are on his side; and for the rest, to throw overboard the Divines, and say *nothing about* those direct statements of the Church herself which he sees he can make nothing of. In the true poetic style recommended by Horace,

"Quæ
Desperat tractata nitescere posse, relinquit;"

Allow me, however, to remind Mr. Bricknell of the no less sapient hint of another ancient poet:

"Si latet, ars prodest; affert deprensa pudorem."

In the hope of producing in Mr. Bricknell's mind a more distinct consciousness of his own system of controversy, I have taken the liberty of calling attention to the subject, and now proceed to verify my statement, by summing up not *one* but *both* sides of the question.

Mr. Bricknell first quoted certain Divines, who however were not in reality opposed to private confession itself, but at most merely to its being enforced or abused. This I pointed out:—a task indeed of no great difficulty, considering that one of them, Bishop Jewell, even while under Mr. Bricknell's own grasp, said distinctly: "*As for private confession, abuses and errors set apart, we do not condemn it, but leave it at liberty*";—another, the celebrated Hooker, proved by his own practice^m that the same was the case with him;—while Burnet,—his own favourite and bosom-friend Burnet,—admitted, on his cross-examination, not merely for himself, but still more distinctly for the Church of England also, *that the Church herself recommended the practice*.

Such then being the evidence of the Divines (I will not say on Mr. Bricknell's side, but) whom Mr. Bricknell himself *subpana'd*, it might

^m Also by his own words, as is shewn at large in the General Postscript. See also the second note to Letter I. (p. 11.)

seem almost superfluous to call witnesses at all against a case which destroyed itself. Considering, however, the difficulty which some find in seeing even the plainest objects in a direction different from that in which they have been accustomed to look, and in order to do something like justice to the merits of the case itself, I adduced in favour of private confession passages of so decided a description, that even Mr. Bricknell has not so much as attempted to explain them otherwise,—taken from Bishop Overall, from Bishop Montague, from Bishop White, from Bishop Taylor (twice), from Bishop Cosin, from Wheatly, and from Archbishop Bramhall.

To all these then what is Mr. Bricknell's reply? Simply that a Bishop speaking against the Church is nothing. Let us see then whether it is against the Church.

1. The Prayer-book still recommends private confession in two separate places. 2. These places are abundantly supported by the clearer and more express declarations of the First Book of Edward VI., which the same authority which substituted the Second for it declared to be "agreeable to the word of God and the Primitive Church". 3. The Homily on Common Prayer and Sacraments, argues on the supposition of its being ordinarily practised. 4. His own especial favourite Burnet, admits in so many words, that *our church does* recommend voluntary confession. And yet Mr. Bricknell, in the teeth of all these facts, presumes to charge those who do but *join in the Church's recommendation*, with "setting up their own judgment against the wisdom of the Church"!

Determined, however, to hold out to the last, Mr. Bricknell produces also a passage from the Homilies. It ought certainly to be a strong passage which could neutralize the facts already established. But what does Mr. Bricknell's passage turn out to be?

Parturiunt montes, nascetur ridiculus mus.

Mr. Bricknell's passage from the Homilies actually draws its own conclusion in so many words,—merely that no man "*should be bound* to the numbering of his sins"! Thus is Mr. Bricknell's last refuge found to be utterly unserviceable, and incapable of affording him any shelter, while on the other hand, another passage from the Homilies (which, as well as those from King Edward's First Book, Mr. Bricknell found it convenient to pass "*sub silentio*" in his *summing up*.) not merely proves clearly the fact that private absolution was ordinarily practised, and that as a minor Sacrament, with the approbation of the Church, but also declares what the outward and visible sign of that minor Sacrament was.

Such then is the balance of authorities. On the one side are

* "The *sub silentio* system" is a term applied by Mr. Bricknell, in his second letter, to the crime of not answering unfounded accusations.

ranged the clear and decisive declarations of the Church and her best Divines: on the other are *alleged* certain isolated passages, whose authors themselves, however, never intended to oppose voluntary, but only compulsory or abused confession. To make Mr. Bricknell right, we should be obliged, *as Mr. Bricknell himself confesses*, to throw overboard those hitherto allowed to be the greatest lights of the Reformed Church,—*in reality*, not them only, but the authorized documents of the Church herself also. And this too while even his own witnesses oppose nothing for which the others contend!

As to Mr. Bricknell's objection that *according to Neal*, Mr. Adams maintained Confession to be *necessary*,—had we Mr. Adams's sermon itself, we should probably find that he was by no means laying down a general rule, but merely speaking of those cases in which it is necessary; as for instance, that of a troubled conscience, in which according to Taylor (Holy Dying, chap. 5. sect. 3. p. 553. Ed. Lond. 1839.) "all Churches" esteem it so. But whatever may have been the cases in which Mr. Adams thought private confession necessary,—how the stronger opinion of one Divine should weaken the admission of another, I mean of Burnet, is a point rather difficult to see.

Mr. Bricknell however accuses me of 'passing the Fathers over in silence'. He forgets that the passages which he, or rather his witnesses, adduced or referred to, were not merely included in my general remarks, but by his own witnesses, if not in so many words, at least *virtually*, allowed to be opposed, not to voluntary, but merely to compulsory or abused confession. I am glad, however, to find that Mr. Bricknell has so proper a sense of the respect due to the Fathers; and with the view of keeping up this wholesome feeling, I will endeavour, before I have done with the subject, to furnish him, together with something more from our own best Divines, with one or two extracts from those earlier and more indisputable authorities themselves.

For the present, I must remain as before, your obedient servant,

ACADEMICUS.

January 18. 1842.

P. S. Mr. Bricknell, when speaking of another of your correspondents, expresses his opinion, that, if "no *anonymous* communications" were admitted, what he calls that correspondent's "misrepresentations", "would never have seen the light."^o Mr. Bricknell is certainly very charitable to his opponents: but that *the addition of a name* is no more a security for *correct statement* than for *charity*, Mr. Bricknell's own letters afford striking proof. One remarkable instance of this I particularly noticed in my last letter but one.

^o Letter on "the Principle of Reserve" in the *Oxford Herald* of Friday Dec. 24, 1841.

LETTER VI.

To the Editor of the Oxford University Herald.

SIR,—As Mr. Bricknell seems at length more disposed for peace, and to be tired of carrying on controversies with every body about nothing, my remarks on his last letter shall be the shortest possible.

1. With respect to the temper of Mr. Bricknell's attacks and rejoinders, I shall merely leave the public to judge for themselves,—the more, as one remarkable specimen was particularly noticed in my last letter. Of the same character was an injurious insinuation attempted by means of a misapplied quotation from Sophocles (Ed. Col. 1052, 3, ed. Oxon. 1832.) in his letter of Dec. 29. That he should now complain of being attacked himself is indeed surprising.

2. Mr. Bricknell still keeps out of sight the fact that the objections of the Homily, and of our English Divines generally, are levelled (as he has repeatedly been reminded) only against the *compelling* private confession:—when voluntary, *even Burnet* allows that OUR CHURCH DOES recommend it.

3. The distinction^p which Mr. Bricknell accuses me of neglecting is altogether unreal. For, not to use any other arguments,—(1.) If it be once granted that not every one who *can* “quiet his own conscience,” *ought* to be able so to do,—that a tender conscience, and one that *will not easily* be quieted, so far from being a mere accident or disease, is that very frame of mind to which both Scripture and the Church, and every increased view of Divine holiness, tends increasingly to bring us; if this, I say, be granted, and also that the receiving of the holy Communion is not in the eye of the Church a mere occasional, but an *habitual* act, it will, I think, be sufficiently clear that the Prayer-Book exhortation to private confession before the Communion is of far more extensive application than Mr. Bricknell seems to have supposed.—(2.) If life is indeed uncertain, then surely it cannot be wise to leave to a death-bed that confession, at least of any greater sins, which then at all events, [if at least we even then feel them as we ought,] *it is agreed* we ought to perform. But if this be true, then (by inference at least) the exhortation to private confession in the Visitation of the Sick also, is of far more extensive application than Mr. Bricknell seems to have supposed.

4. The Fathers included in Mr. Bricknell's modern quotations are anything but opposed to private confession rightly used. This, in-

^p I. e. that of confessing before communicating, and on a sick bed, *if our conscience troubles us*, and the doing it generally without reference to such supposed limitations. It is indeed a strange interpretation, to make it even a *duty* to calculate carefully the letter, rather than freely follow out the spirit, of a Church or Scripture recommendation.

deed, might well be taken for granted, when Mr. Bricknell's own authorities, in whom he quotes them, are quite of the same opinion, as I have already abundantly proved.—As to Nectarius, Mr. Bricknell has mistaken the argument of the Homily, and altogether misunderstood the whole business. What that patriarch abolished was, the appointment of a penitentiary Priest to determine *which* of men's privately confessed sins they should be recommended to confess publicly as well as privately. Private confession, as it obviously existed then, (and had existed from the beginning,) so it has continued to this day, as well in the Eastern as in the Western Churches. See on this subject Wheatly on the Common Prayer, pp. 428-430, ed. London, 1720; and Morinus De Pœnitentia, lib. 2, cap. 9, § 5-7, pp. 88, 89.

Mr. Bricknell will perhaps shelter himself behind the Homily, and say that if he is guilty of historical error, the writer of that discourse must be so too, for that he (Mr. Bricknell) is at least guiltless of searching history and the Fathers for himself, and merely quoted them at second-hand from one of the Homilies. This, however, will not do. No one ever imagined that we were bound to do more than believe *the doctrine* of the Homilies, (which is all the Articles require of us); the particular arguments and interpretations by which their authors endeavour to support or enforce that doctrine, are mere matter of opinion, to which no one is required to assent; much less to their errors in matter of fact and history: else might we be expected to believe even the ridiculous fable of '*Pope Joan*', which the Homily for Whitsunday uses as an argument against the Church of Rome! (P. 513, edition of the Christian Knowledge Society.) The writer of the Homilies is opposed (as I have all along reminded Mr. Bricknell) to nothing but compulsory confession: and he appears to have supposed that what Nectarius abolished *was* ordinary private confession compulsorily required, and that his abolishing such confession was a proof that he did not consider it of Divine institution. This, however, is a mere historical error, into which Mr. Bricknell ought not to have been led blindfold, it being now generally expected (except, of course, in mere declamations) that men at least verify references, and examine facts for themselves before they *make them their own*, and refer with so great a parade, to that which has *cost them nothing*.

5. It is worth noting, that *even Mr. Bricknell* is aware that our most celebrated Divines have always been of what he calls *Tractarian* views. This is sufficiently evident from the latter part of his fifth paragraph.

6. When Mr. Bricknell talks of confining the controversy to the Bible, and proposes my proving private confession from *it*, he forgets

that (however easy such a proof would be), *any* "controversy" would be altogether out of *my* course. *My* business has been simply the proof of an historical *fact*, viz. that, *right or wrong*, both our Church and her most celebrated Divines, treading in the steps of the primitive Church and the ancient Fathers, have always thought that the Bible itself, if not in so many words, at least by fair inference, as in the case of infant Baptism, does recommend private confession. To examine *whether they were right or wrong in so doing*, is altogether beyond my object, and would be as needless *for those for whom I have written*, as it would unquestionably be improper and out of place for any one in the columns of a newspaper.

7. As to private communications, if Mr. Bricknell wishes to favour me in this way, he had better direct them to the care of the Editor. I cannot, however, undertake to enter into private correspondence with him. My object has been to prevent *others* from being misled by his confidence, and to expose the rattle of an empty and electioneering attack. Παλλῶν ἀκούσας οἶδα θρίων τὸν ψόφον, says Bdelycleon, (Aristoph. Vesp. 436.); and certainly Mr. Bricknell's *fig-leaves* appear to be of a no less *crackling* description.

8. With respect to the living "Bishop" who (it seems) has called that an "abomination of desolation", which the Church and all her greatest Divines have so uniformly recommended, if Mr. Bricknell has rightly quoted his words, why does he not inform us further, to whom we are indebted for so important an opinion, and the important effect it may naturally be expected to have.

So much for Mr. Bricknell's letter. I now proceed to furnish you with the long-promised extracts from Walton's Lives, shewing clearly the real opinions both of Hooker and of Sanderson on this subject:—

"About one day before his (Hooker's) death, Dr. Saravia, who knew the very secrets of his soul, (for they were supposed to be confessors to each other,) came to him, and, after a conference of the benefit, the necessity, and safety of the Church's absolution, it was resolved the Doctor should give him both that and the Sacrament the day following. To which end the Doctor came, and, after a short retirement and privacy, they two returned to the company; and then the Doctor gave him *and* some of those friends which were with him the blessed Sacrament of the body and blood of our Jesus. Which being performed, the Doctor thought he saw a reverend gaiety and joy in his face;" &c. — Page 189, Christian Knowledge Society's edition, London 1840.

"After his (Bishop Sanderson's) taking his bed, and about a day before his death, he desired his Chaplain, Mr. Pullen, to give him Absolution, and at his performing that Office, he pulled off his cap,

that Mr. Pullen might lay his hand upon his bare head. After this desire of his was satisfied, his body seemed to be at more ease, and his mind more cheerful ;" &c.—Ibid, p. 363.

I promised also another passage from Taylor. After shewing the little good that can be done by a Minister without such private confession, he proceeds to give *twenty-four* "arguments and exhortations to move the sick man to confession of sins." As I cannot, however, expect you to reprint the whole of these reasons, I shall content myself with observing that he speaks of it as a duty "so useful in all cases, so necessary in some, and encouraged by promises evangelical, by Scripture precedents, by the example of both Testaments, and prescribed by injunctions apostolical, and by the Canon of all Churches, and the example of all ages, and taught us even by the proportions of duty, and the analogy to the power ministerial, and the very necessities of every man"; (Holy Dying, chap. 5, § 3. p. 554, ed. London, 1839.);—strongly recommending your readers to study the whole chapter, or rather the whole work, for themselves.

Collier, in his Ecclesiastical History, has also enumerated some of the principal arguments in favour of private confession, (part 2, book 4, pp. 247, 248, ed. London, 1714.)^a

See also Hammond on James v. 14—16.^r And here again one cannot but remark :—if the fruits of Confession, even when delayed to a death-bed, are so good and valuable,—how much better must it be, to take our spiritual disorders in time, and not leave to the last that for which, it may be, no last may be given.

I now proceed to redeem another promise. In his letter of Jan. 12, Mr. Bricknell had taunted me with 'passing over the Fathers in silence'. In my reply to that letter (dated Jan. 18.) I pointed out his mistake; but being pleased with his implied good feeling towards them, I promised to endeavour, before I had done with the subject, to furnish him with one or two extracts. Mr. Bricknell, I am sorry to find, appears in the mean time to have gone back; as in his last letter he says 'he shall decline to follow me to tradition and the Fathers.' However, I shall keep my word, and hope that he will at least so far change his mind as to read the following passages, which have been carefully (and as literally as possible) translated from the originals. Should he ever feel disposed to enter further on the study, he will doubtless be able to obtain from his friends the requisite information.

First, then, it must be borne in mind that all those powerful ex-

^a An extract is given in the General Postscript.

^r Already partially referred to in the collection reprinted in Letter I. (p. 13.)

hortations to *public* confession and penance* which are found in their writings, apply *a fortiori* as a recommendation of the infinitely easier duty of doing the same things in private.

Thus, then, for example, does Tertullian speak of public confession and penance for the greater crimes :—

(1.) “I presume, however, that most men either shun this work, or put it off from day to day, as a public exposure of themselves ; regarding more their shame than their health ; like those who, having contracted disease in the more private parts of the body, avoid making their physicians acquainted with it, and so perish with their bashfulness.”—(De Pœnitentia, cap. 10.)

(2.) “If thou drawest back from Confession, consider in thine heart that hell which Confession quenches for thee ; and first picture to thyself the greatness of the punishment, that thou mayest not doubt concerning the adoption of the remedy.”—(Ibid. cap. 12.)

(3.) “When, therefore, thou knowest that after that first defence of the Baptism given by the Lord, there is yet in Confession a second aid against hell, why neglectest thou thy salvation ? Why delayest thou to take in hand that which thou knowest will heal thee ?”—(Ibid.)

And concerning public absolution :—

“Is it better, being damned to remain hid, than to be absolved in public ? (*damnatum latere quam palam absolvi ?*)”—(Ibid. cap. 11.)

2. St. Cyprian, in his *Liber de Lapsis*, praises those who, by confessing to the Priests their having even entertained the thought of giving way in a time of persecution, ‘put forth the weight of their

* *Penance*, as the term is commonly applied, whether it be of that severer kind which belonged to the public discipline of the ancient Church, or of those lighter descriptions now enjoined by Priests after hearing confessions, and before giving absolution, must be regarded as repentance, (or to use the Latin term *penitence* or *penance*,) expressing itself in *acts* of self condemnation, abasement, and castigation ; whereby the sinner anticipating, at least by some small *act* of acknowledgement, the righteous judgment of God due to his sins, unites himself to, and thereby lays hold by faith upon, the satisfaction made upon the Cross by his Saviour and Head, and so ‘accepting the punishment of his iniquity’ (Lev. 26. 43.), receives from Him, by the hands of His Priest, the gratuitous pardon and absolution of his sins. And hence it will appear that, however desirable heavier penances may be as a matter of discipline, yet as the heaviest penance possible cannot really atone for our sins, or any part of them, so even a very light one, being approved by the Priest, may serve effectually as an *acknowledgement* of the nature described. It must be remembered, however, that the lighter the penance prescribed by the Priest, the more it is recommended to the penitent to practise self-discipline himself, to wear out thereby the scars and stains which even his pardoned sins (if mortal) have left, together with whatever else remains after ‘the wickedness of his sin’ (Ps. 32. 6.) has been forgiven ; and to remember both the letter and the spirit of that heavenly religion which enjoins us all to deny ourselves and take up our cross daily (Luke 9. 23.), to take leave of all that we can call our own, (*ὅς οὐκ ἀποδοσεται νόμι τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ ὑποδουλοῦν*, ch. 14. 33.), if we wish to be counted among the disciples of Christ.

conscience, and sought a salutary remedy even for small and moderate wounds, knowing that it is written, *God is not mocked*; and holding these up as an example to the rest, "Let each," says he, "I entreat you, brethren, confess his transgression, while yet he who has transgressed is in the world, while his confession can be received, while the satisfaction and remission made by the Priests is acceptable with the Lord."—(Operum, tom. 1. p. 341, ed. Wirceburgi, 1782.)

3. Origen, in his second Homily on Leviticus, says, "There is yet a seventh remission of sins, . . . when he (the sinner) shrinks not from shewing his sin to the Priests of the Lord, and seeking a remedy &c."—(Tom. 2, p. 191, col. 1, B. C. ed. Bened.)

In his seventeenth Homily on St. Luke:—"For if we do this, and confess our sins not only to God, but to those also who are able to heal our wounds and sins, our sins will be blotted out by Him Who saith, Behold, I will blot out as a cloud thine iniquities, and as a thick cloud thy sins."—(Tom. 3, p. 953, col. 1. A.)

4. St. Basil thus answers the two following questions:—

(1.) "Whether forbidden actions should be declared without shame to all, or to some, and who these are?"

Answer. ". . . So also the confession of sins ought to be made to those who are able to heal them."—(Regulæ breviores, qu. 229, tom. 2, p. 492. B, C. ed. Bened.)

(2.) "He who wishes to confess his sins, ought he to confess them to all and any persons, or to whom?"

Ans. ". . . It is necessary that the sins be confessed to those who are entrusted with the dispensation of the mysteries of God."—(Ibid. qu. 288, p. 516. C, D.)

5. Paulinus, in his Life of St. Ambrose written to St. Augustine, (§ 39.), says of that Saint:—

"Whosoever any one, in order to receive penance, had confessed his faults to him, he so wept as to compel the other to weep also: for he seemed to himself to be prostrate with him who was prostrate. And the nature of the offences which he (the penitent) confessed, he uttered to none but God, with Whom he interceded."—(Gallandii Bibliotheca Veterum Patrum, tom. 9, p. 29, col. 1. C, D.)

6. St. Gregory of Nyssa:—

"Take also the Priest a partaker of thy affliction, as a father. . . . Shew him, without bashfulness, the things hidden. Make bare the secret parts of thy soul, as shewing to a physician a hidden malady: he will take care both of thy honour and of thy cure."—(De Pœnitentia, parag. ult.; tom. 2, p. 176. A, B. ed. Bened.)

7. Pacian, in his *Parænesis ad Pœnitentiam*:—

"What wilt thou do, who deceivest the Priest, &c. . . . I entreat

you, therefore, brethren, . . . cease to cover a wounded conscience. The sick, when wise, dread not the physicians.”—(Pag. 7. ed. Paris. 1538.)

8. St. Jerome, on Eccl. x. 11. (*literally*, If the serpent bite without whisper, then is there no advantage to the master of tongue):—

“Otherwise: If the serpent the devil have bitten a man in secret, and, without any one’s knowing it, have infected him with the venom of sin, if he who has been smitten hold his peace, and do not the deeds of repentance, and will not confess his wound to his brother and teacher (*magistro*), the teacher who has a tongue to heal cannot easily do him good. For if the sick man blush to confess his wound to the physician, what it knows not of, medicine does not cure.”

On Matt. xvi. 19:

“According to his office, when he has heard the varieties of the sins, he knows who is to be bound, who loosed.”

9. St. Leo the Great, blaming a custom which some had introduced, of publishing to the congregation the sins for which public penance was performed, says:—

“It is sufficient that the guilt of men’s consciences be laid open to the Priests alone in secret confession. . . . For that confession suffices, which is offered first to God, then to the Priest also, who draws near to pray for the sins of the penitents.”—(Ep. 136, *ad Episcopos Campaniæ* &c., cap. 2, p. 719, ed. Paris. 1675.)

And again:—

“So that they who had violated the gifts of regeneration, condemning themselves by their own sentence, should come to the remission of their crimes; the helps of the Divine goodness being so ordered, that the forgiveness of God cannot be obtained [i. e. by those who have violated those gifts] but through the supplications of the Priests.”—(Ep. 82. (al. 91. or 108.) *ad Theodorum*, p. 605.)

The above passages will more than suffice, both to redeem my promise, and to satisfy every reasonable mind, what the teaching of the Fathers, and what the practice of the early Church was, on the subject of private confession to a Priest.

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

March 11, 1842.

ACADEMICUS.

N. B. Some alterations and additions have been made since last week, with the view especially of finishing the subject at once.

GENERAL POSTSCRIPT.

SINCE the above Letters were written, I have looked out the passages from Hooker, the references to which, as to all his other quotations, Mr. Bricknell persisted so remarkably in concealing; and find there, in the sixth book, and within a few pages of one another, not merely those passages themselves, but also all his accompanying quotations, that from Burnet, which has already been noticed, alone excepted.

Why Mr. Bricknell should have wished to conceal the sources of his quotations is a question I shall not attempt to answer: what temporary advantage he has gained, or appeared to gain, by so doing, the public will see for themselves.

The quotations from Hooker were adduced not merely in opposition to the real sentiments of that great Divine,—of this the most moderate recollection of his works, even without the decisive argument of his own practice, (see Letter 6, p. 25^t.) would satisfy any one—but further, in opposition to his own clear statements of his own views in the same place of his works from which Mr. Bricknell's picked fragments were selected. I will give the references which Mr. Bricknell withheld, and enable the reader to judge for himself.

I. His first quotation was: "the Church hath hitherto thought it the wiser way to refer men's hidden sins unto God and themselves only", from Book VI. ch. § 15. vol. 3. p. 50. second University (Keble's) edition. That this relates only to the question of *compelling* or *not* compelling, is clear from the sentence next before, in which he says that the Church of England imposes on the people "*no such necessity*" "of opening their transgressions unto men, *as if remission of sins otherwise were impossible*," nor regards the thing itself "as though it were either unlawful or unprofitable, save only for these inconveniences, which the world hath by experience observed in it heretofore," i. e. (of course) in *compulsory*, not in voluntary, confession to man. To this it is obvious that the term "experience" distinctly refers: indeed, if anything else but *absolutely necessary* confession had been spoken of, to what purpose would the preceding words have been so carefully selected and defined: "*no such necessity as if remission of sins were otherwise impossible*."

II. His next passage, "They are men," &c. will be found in full in § 6. p. 23. It will be the less necessary to dwell upon it, because Mr. Bricknell himself will not pretend to say that *this* pas-

^t See also the second-note to the first Letter, p. 11.

sage opposes anything more than what itself expresses, viz. "*any such necessity.*" I shall therefore content myself with remarking, that the word "*such*" relates exclusively (as the reader will naturally anticipate) to the view taken by the Church of Rome; and that though Hooker says that the Fathers of the first three centuries "did not gather by our Saviour's words any such necessity" for private confession, he adds, that public confession (i.e. of the greater offences) they did think necessary by way of discipline.

III. Next comes a memorable passage in Greek; memorable at least for this,—for the torture to which it has been put in its captor's unhappy attempt to introduce it in that ancient garb, in preference to a dress of plain British manufacture, such as Hooker had given it in his text. In consequence of this unfortunate desire on Mr. Bricknell's part, it has endured, not indeed mutilation, but what is perhaps scarcely less painful, the incorporation of a very awkward excrescence. To speak plainly, Mr. Bricknell, in consequence, I should suppose, of the want of a stop in his edition of Hooker, has taken the title of the homily (or rather portion of homily) from which that Divine had quoted in the margin, for a part of the quotation itself.

Hooker's Greek quotation, taken from the margin of p. 46. (§. 13. note 22.) was:

"Chrys. Hom. *περὶ μετανοίας καὶ ἐξομολογήσεως. παρὰ τοῖς λογισμοῖς γενέσθω τῶν πεπλημμελημένων ἢ ἐξέτασις· ἀμάρτυρον ἔστω τὸ δικαστήριον· ὁ Θεὸς δρᾶτω μόνος ἐξομολογούμενον.*"

Mr. Bricknell, whose intention it was not to let his readers know either to whose researches he was indebted for his quotations, or whence they were originally derived, of course omitted the words "Chrys. Hom.", and *would* of course have omitted the following words, *περὶ μετανοίας καὶ ἐξομολογήσεως*, (*concerning repentance and confession*,) had he perceived them to be merely the title of the homily (or supposed homily, in reality an extract from a homily,) from which the passage itself was drawn. This however I suppose the want of a stop after *ἐξομολογήσεως* in his edition prevented him from perceiving; at least in the only edition besides Keble's to which I have referred, I observe that it is so wanting.

This however is a trifling error if compared with that into which he has fallen with respect to the sense of the passage itself; which indeed is such as may well be a standing warning both to himself and others, of the danger of a careless way of adopting other people's quotations. The Greek which Mr. Bricknell has given, reads in English as follows:

"Let the enquiry of the offences be made in the thoughts; let

the tribunal be without witness; let God alone see (thee) confessing."

Taken by themselves, these words certainly do not appear particularly favourable to Auricular Confession: they shall now be seen in connection with what goes before and after.

"But dost thou feel shame and blush to declare thy sins? It were most fitting, even if thou hadst to tell and usher them forth before men also, not even so to be ashamed; for it is a shame to commit, not to confess sins. Now however there is no necessity to confess them in the presence of witnesses. Let the enquiry of the offences be made in the thoughts of him who is conscious; let the tribunal be without witness. Let God alone see thee confessing, God who upbraideth not with the sins, but pardoneth the sins upon the confession. And dost thou even so delay and refuse?"

The difference of the idea conveyed by the *let* of the picked bit and of the whole passage is striking. When taken by itself it looks like a recommendation: when read in its connection, no one can suppose that it is any thing more than a concession to those who were not in a state, or not prepared, to attempt more.

IV. His last passage from Hooker, "No, no: these opinions have youth in their countenance, antiquity knew them not, it never thought nor dreamed of them", is from *the text* of Hooker (*ibid.* p. 47), *and relates only to "that extreme and rigorous necessity of auricular and private confession which is at this day so mightily upheld by the Church of Rome"!*

So much for Mr. Bricknell's quotations from Hooker. I will now take the liberty of introducing to the reader, without Mr. Bricknell's help, two more passages of Hooker, the first of which follows almost immediately, the other at a very short distance, after Mr. Bricknell's last citation from him:

1. "In the order which Christian religion hath taught for procurement of God's mercy towards sinners, confession is acknowledged a principal duty; yea, in some cases, confession to man, not to God only: it is not in the Reformed Churches denied by the learned sort of divines, but that even this confession, cleared from all errors, is both lawful and behoveful for God's people." § 14. p. 47.

2. "But concerning confession in private, the Churches of Germany, as well the rest as Lutherans, agree that all men should at certain times confess their offences to God in the hearing of God's Ministers, thereby to shew how their sins displease them, to receive instruction for the wariar carriage of themselves hereafter, to be soundly resolved, if any scruple or snare of conscience do entangle their minds, and, which is most material, to the end that men may at God's hands

seek every one his own particular pardon, through the power of those keys, which the Minister of God using according to our blessed Saviour's institution in that case, it is their part to accept the benefit thereof as God's most merciful ordinance for their good, and without any distrust or doubt, to embrace joyfully His grace so given them, according to the word of our Lord, Which hath said, *Whose sins ye remit are remitted.* So that grounding upon this assured belief, they are to rest with minds encouraged and persuaded concerning the forgiveness of all their sins, as out of Christ's own word and power by the ministry of the keys." P. 48.

I now leave it to the reader to judge how much reason Mr. Bricknell had for the innocent surprise his third letter expresses at my *claiming Hooker altogether as a witness in favour of private confession.* (Letter 3, p. 16.)

V. The only passage which remains to be noticed, is that from Jewell, which will also be found in the margin of Hooker, (§ 15. p. 50. note 29.), as follows: "As for private confession, abuses and errors set apart, we condemn it not, but leave it at liberty.—*Jewell, Defens.* p. 156." In the editions of 1609 and 1611 (the latter of which is cited by Keble) it is given as follows (p. 158): "Abuses and errors removed, and especially the Priest being learned, we mishke no manner confession, be it private or public."

I have mentioned in the Preface Mr. Wordsworth's very valuable Appendix to his late Sermon on Evangelical Repentance. I will now present the reader with a specimen of the important documents collected therein, beginning with the sentiments of the English *Monumental Reformers* with regard to Auricular Confession.

1. For *Cranmer's* opinions I shall refer the reader to the above named Appendix itself, p. 71, 72, with the note.

2. Those of *Latimer* are expressed as follows: "But to speak of right and true Confession, *I would to God it were kept in England;* for it is a good thing. And those which find themselves grieved in conscience might go to a learned man, and there fetch of him comfort of the word of God, and so come to a quiet conscience. . . . And sure it grieveth me much that such confessions are not kept in England, &c."—*Sermon on the Third Sunday after Epiphany*, vol. ii. p. 852. App. p. 69.

3. *Ridley* writes,—“ *Confession unto the Minister*, which is able to instruct, correct, comfort, and inform the weak, wounded, and ignorant conscience, indeed *I ever thought might do much good to Christ's congregation, and so, I assure you, I think even at this day.*”—*Letter to one Master West, sometime his chaplain; from Fox. See Eccles. Biog.*, vol. iii. p. 67.’ *App.* p. 71.

The opinions of the Continental Reformers may be gathered partly from the last cited passage of Hooker, but more fully from a note of Mr. Wordsworth's, *App.* pp. 69—71.

Mr. Wordsworth observes: “It is right that those who are content to look *no higher* than the Reformation, and so decline all appeal to the practice of the primitive Church, should bear in mind what the opinion and avowed principle even of the *foreign Reformers*,—of the *true and original Protestants* themselves, was upon this point, however little it has been acted out by those who profess to be their followers.” He then proceeds to give Latin extracts from the Confessions of Faith of the foreign Reformed Churches, and from the written opinions of the foreign Reformers, Calvin himself included. For these I shall refer to the note itself, observing only that the extracts both from the Augsburg and from the Saxon Confessions declare that the rite of private absolution is to be retained in the Church, the latter Confession adding, “and we firmly (*constanter*) retain it”, and the second Augsburg Confession even saying, that “to take away private absolution out of the Church would be *impious*”; while the order of the Church of Lunenburg “very strictly (*admodum severè*) enjoins that the Eucharist is not to be communicated to any one who has not confessed and been absolved by private absolution, forbidding pastors hereafter to absolve two or three at once.”

I shall now add, from the same valuable collection, a few more specimens of the way in which our own later Divines have treated the subject.

1. *Bp. Andrewes* ironically observes: “One we must have to know thoroughly the state of our lands or goods: one we must have entirely acquainted with the state of our body: *in our souls it holdeth not: I say no more: IT WERE GOOD IT DID.*”—*Sermon IV. on Whitsunday*, p. 636, fol. edit.’ *App.* p. 74.

2. *Bp. Moreton*.—“It is not questioned between us whether it be convenient for a man burthened with sin to lay open his conscience in private unto the minister of God, and to seek at his hands both counsel of instruction, and the comfort of God's pardon.”—*Catholic Appeal*, lib. ii. cap. 14.’ *App.* p. 76.

3. *King James I.*—“For my part, with Calvin (*Inst. lib. iii. c. iv. § 12*), I commend confession, even privately to a Churchman, and

I wish with all my heart it were more in custom among us than it is, as a thing of excellent use, especially of preparing men to receive the Sacrament.—*Medit. upon the Lord's Prayer.* *Ibid.*

4. *Dr. Crackanthorpe* (in Lat.)—"We have abrogated neither private confession nor private absolution."—*Def. Eccl. Angl.*, p. 605. *App.* p. 77.

5. *Bp. Montague*.—"It is confessed that private confession to a priest is of very ancient practice in the Church; of excellent use and practice, being discreetly handled. We refuse it to none, if men require it, if need be to have it. We urge it and persuade it in extremes. We urge it in case of perplexity, for the quieting of men disturbed, and their consciences."—*Ans. to the late Gagger*, p. 83. *Ibid.*

6. *Dr. Donne*.—"This is the Sacrament of Confession. So we may call it in a safe meaning; that is the Mystery of Confession: for Confession is a mysterious thing. If God had appointed His Angels or His Saints to absolve me, as *He hath His Ministers*, I would confess to them. Men come not willingly to this manifestation of themselves. None of all the Reformed Churches have forbidden confession, though *some practise it less than others*. And this *useful* and un-mis-interpretable *Confession* is the more recommended to us, in that with which David shuts up his act *adversum se* (Ps. xxxii. 5, as out of St. Jerom and our former translation). The more I find Confession or any religious practice repugnant to mine own nature, the further I will go in it." *Serm.* lviii. vol. i. p. 582, 589. *App.* p. 78.

7. *Archbishop Usher*.—"Be it therefore known . . . that no kind of *confession, either public or private*, is disallowed by us, that is any way requisite for the *due execution* of that ancient *power of the keys* which Christ bestowed upon His Church." *Answer to a Jesuit's Challenge. Of Confession*, p. 82.

"Otherwise neither they," (the ancient Fathers,) "nor we do debar men from opening their grievances unto the physicians of their souls; either for their better information in the true state of their disease; or for the quieting of their troubled consciences; or for receiving further direction from them out of God's word, both for the recovery of their present sickness, and for the prevention of the like danger in the time to come. But when it is not taken in time, but suffered to fester and wrangle, the cure will not now prove to be so easy" (as to be effected by confession to God only). . . . "At such a time as this, then, when the sinner can find no ease at home, what should he do but use the best means he can find abroad? Is there no *balm in Gilead*? Is there no *physician there*? which

kind of medicinal confession *we well approve of, and acknowledge to have been ordinarily prescribed by the ancient Fathers for the cure of secret sins.*

“But as for notorious offences which bred open scandal, private confession was not thought sufficient : but there was further required *public acknowledgement of the fault, and the solemn use of the keys* for the reconciliation of the penitent.” *Ibid.* p. 89—92.

“We acknowledge most willingly that the *principal part of the Priest's ministry* is exercised in the matter of *forgiveness of sins.*” *Ibid. Of the Priest's Power*, p. 109. *App.* p. 79.

8. *Dr. Heylin.*—“For confession to be made to the Priest or Minister, it is agreeable both to the doctrine and intent of the Church of England, though not so much in practice as it ought to be.” *Theolog. Veterum*, p. 455. *App.* p. 81.

9. *Dr. Hammond.*—“And if it be now demanded of me, whether *private absolution* be not contained under the importance of these places? I answer that this last distinction hath in effect answered this question, and defined that in case of *private binding* it doth come under it, and that that, though in *some sense* it be left *ad libitum*, or voluntary to the penitent's will or choice, is yet *necessary* to every one whose conscience either is not able to perform and go through the work of inward repentance with God alone, or is not able to satisfy itself with such performance without the Minister's assistance called in.” *Of the Power of the Keys*, ch. iv. § 103. *App.* p. 82.

“There will be little matter of doubt or controversy, but that *private*, frequent, spiritual conference betwixt fellow-Christians, but especially (and in matters of high concernment and difficulty) betwixt the Presbyter and those of his charge, *even in time of health*; and peculiarly that part of it which is spent in the discussion of every man's special sins, and infirmities and inclinations, may prove *very useful and advantageous* (in order to spiritual directions, reproof and comfort) to the making the man of God perfect. And to tell truth, if the pride and self-conceit of some, the wretchlessness of others, the bashfulness of a third sort, the nauseating and instant satiety of any good in a fourth, the follies of men and artifices of Satan, had not put this practice quite out of fashion among us, there is no doubt but that MORE GOOD might be done by ministers THIS WAY, than is now done by any other means separated from the use of this; particularly than by that of public preaching, (which yet need not be neglected the more when this is used,) which hath now the fate to be cried up, and almost solely to be depended on; it being the likelier way, as Quintilian saith, (comparing public and private teaching of youth,) to fill narrow-

mouthed bottles, (and such are the most of us,) by taking them single in the hand, and pouring in water into each, than by setting them all together, and throwing never so many buckets of water on them." *Ibid.* sect. 104. p. 449. App. p. 83.

10. *Herbert Thorndike*.—"I must freely glorify God by freely professing, that, in my judgment, no Christian kingdom or state can maintain itself to be that which it pretendeth more effectually, than by giving force and effect to the law of private confession once a year, by such means as may seem both requisite and effectual to enforce it. Not that I do condemn that order which the Church of England, at the Reformation, contented itself with, (as rendering the reformation thereof no reformation, and leaving men destitute of sufficient means for the remission of sin after baptism,) to leave it to the discretion and conscience of those who found themselves burdened with sin, to seek help by the means of their pastors, as appeareth both in the Communion Service and in the Visitation of the Sick; but because I see the Church of England hath failed of that great piece of reformation which it aimed at in this point, to wit, the retrieving of public penance. This aim you shall find expressed in the beginning of the Commination against Sinners, in these words, 'Brethren,' &c. What is the reason that so godly a desire of so evident a reformation could not take place, when reformation in the Church was so generally sought, (besides those common obstructions which all good pretences [i. e. proposals] will necessarily find in all communities of Christians,) I shall not much labour to persuade him that shall consider the tares of Puritanism to have been sowed together with the grain of reformation in the Church of England." *Epilogue* &c., book iii. *On the Laws of the Church*, chap. ix². p. 104. App. p. 86.

11. *Bishop Taylor*.—"When a penitent confesses his sin, the holy man that ministers to his repentance, and hears his confession, must not without great cause lessen the shame of the repenting man: he must directly encourage the duty, but not add confidence. . . . Let nothing be offered to lessen the hatred or the greatness of the sin, lest a temptation to sin hereafter be sowed in the furrows of the present repentance." *On Repentance*, chap. x. sect. viii. § 105.

"There are many sad contingencies in the constitution of Ecclesiastical affairs, in which every man that needs this help, and would fain make use of it, cannot; but when he can meet with the blessing, it were well it were more frequently and more readily entertained." *Ibid.* § 110. See the whole section. App. p. 89.

12. *Dr. Robert South*.—"So much of private confession as may be

of spiritual use for the disburthening of a troubled conscience So much, I confess, the Church of England does approve, advise, and allow of. I say it does *advise it*, and that *as a sovereign expedient, proper in the nature and reason of the thing.*" *Sermons*, vol. iv. p. 212.' *App.* p. 90.

13. *Dr. George Hickes.*—"It is most certain that the primitive Church never accounted a sinner to be justified, HOWEVER HUMBLE AND CONTRITE, till he had obtained *Sacerdotal Absolution.*" *Two Treatises, &c.*' *App.* p. 91.

14. *Dr. Jeremy Collier.*—"That *Auricular Confession* is attended with advantage seems not ill proved by *Erasmus*. I shall mention a little of his reasoning upon this subject. In the first place he takes notice, that pride is the main principle of revolt and disobedience. The making a discovery of our lives cannot be done without some conquest upon pride. The shame of repeating this discipline makes a man more guarded in his practice, and is a sort of preservative against a relapse. Besides the penitent, by laying the state of his conscience before a Priest, is better acquainted with the degrees of his guilt, and the danger of his miscarriage. To this he adds, when the disease is known, the cure is more practicable, and the remedies may be better directed." *Eccl. Hist.* part ii. book iv. vol. v. p. 258, 9.' *App.* p. 93.

"And can we imagine that words so plain (*Whosoever sins ye remit, &c.*) in the expression, and so solemn in the occasion, are void of weight and signification? Not to mention the right they imply of admitting into the Church, and excluding from it—not to mention this, *they must amount to this meaning at the lowest, that those who neglect this ordinance of God, and [having need] refuse to apply for absolution to persons thus authorized, shall not have their sins forgiven them, though otherwise not unqualified.*" *Ibid.* p. 262.' *App.* p. 93.

In conclusion, it may be observed, that in proportion as men realise the presence and the holiness of Him to whom their sins are already known, and therefore in proportion to the value of their confessions to God Himself, in that same proportion will confession to man become, in comparison at least, a less fearful thing. But to diminish this fear is assuredly to diminish one of the chief obstacles

to a right estimation, as well of the truth of the argument, as also of the great advantages to be derived from the practice. Without this bias men could hardly escape the reflection, that if all must one day confess their sins publicly, and that under circumstances so very terrible, it cannot be without its use to begin now, and accustom ourselves, in a degree at least, to that which must then be so fully and so fearfully gone through with. And what kind of friends will they then be thought, who, by disparaging confession and self-denial now, lead men to neglect for present ease the faithful performance of duties which, however painful *to do*, it will ever be a source of comfort *to have done*.

THE END.



